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PRESIDENT FORD ON HIS FOREIGN POLICY

ANCR: FOREIGN POLICY CONTINUES TO BE A SUBJECT OF DEBATE IN THE AMERICAN PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION CAMPAIGN. VOA NEWS ANALYST RONALD J. DUNLAVEY DISCUSSES THE LATEST DEVELOPMENTS IN THIS DEBATE:

VOICE: PRESIDENT FORD WENT OUT TO THE WEST COAST LAST WEEK TO CAMPAIGN IN THE PRIMARY ELECTIONS THERE. AND ON SATURDAY---IN PORTLAND, OREGON---HE DELIVERED A SPEECH WHICH AMOUNTED TO A MAJOR DEFENSE OF HIS ADMINISTRATION'S FOREIGN POLICY RECORD. HE SPOKE TO AN ORGANIZATION CALLED THE WORLD AFFAIRS COUNCIL, AND ALTHOUGH THE SPEECH WAS DESCRIBED IN ADVANCE AS NON-PARTISAN, IT WAS OBVIOUS THAT MR. FORD WAS ANSWERING SOME OF THE CHARGES THAT HAVE BEEN MADE BY HIS OPPONENTS IN BOTH THE REPUBLICAN AND DEMOCRATIC PARTIES---AND AT THE SAME TIME CHALLENGING HIS CRITICS.

IN ESSENCE, WHAT THE PRESIDENT SAID WAS THIS: THAT FOREIGN POLICY CANNOT AND SHOULD NOT BE THE VICTIM OF ELECTION YEAR POLITICS. HE MADE THE POINT THAT HE, AS PRESIDENT, COULDN'T PUT OFF DIFFICULT FOREIGN POLICY DECISIONS JUST BECAUSE THIS IS AN ELECTION YEAR. AT THE SAME TIME, SAID MR. FORD, HE DIDN'T INTEND TO LET POLITICAL CONSIDERATIONS AFFECT THE ACTUAL SHAPE OF THE DECISIONS. HE SAID THAT HE WOULD DO WHAT HE CONSIDERS RIGHT AND NECESSARY, WITHOUT UNDUE REGARD FOR DOMESTIC POLITICAL CONSEQUENCES.

(OPT.) AS AN EXAMPLE, HE CITED SECRETARY KISSINGER'S RECENT TRIP TO AFRICA, DURING WHICH---IT HAS BEEN CHARGED---THE SYMPATHETIC ATTITUDES EXPRESSED TOWARD BLACK AFRICAN NATIONALISM COST THE PRESIDENT VOTES IN TEXAS AND OTHER SOUTHERN AND

WESTERN PRIMARY ELECTIONS. THE TRIP WAS JUSTIFIED AND WORTHWHILE, DECLARED MR. FORD; IT CARRIED TO BLACK AFRICA THE MESSAGE THAT, AS HE PUT IT, "AMERICA CARES" AND SUPPORTS THE IMPLEMENTATION IN AFRICA OF SELF-DETERMINATION, MAJORITY RULE AND FULL PROTECTION OF MINORITY RIGHTS. (END OPT.)

THE PRESIDENT'S DEFENSE OF HIS FOREIGN POLICY--- TOGETHER WITH SIMILAR STATEMENTS BY SECRETARY KISSINGER--- HAVE UNDOUBTEDLY BEEN TRIGGERED BY THE HIGHLY ARTICULATE CRITICISM OF THAT POLICY, PARTICULARLY BY THE FORMER GOVERNOR OF CALIFORNIA, RONALD REAGAN, HIS CHIEF AND ONLY SERIOUS RIVAL FOR THE REPUBLICAN NOMINATION. MR. REAGAN HAS BEEN CRITICAL OF THE ADMINISTRATION ON A NUMBER OF FOREIGN POLICY ISSUES: DETENTE, DEFENSE, THE PANAMA CANAL, AND THE STRATEGIC ARMS NEGOTIATIONS. ON THIS LAST, HE HAS WARNED AGAINST SECRET AGREEMENTS. WITHOUT MENTIONING THE GOVERNOR BY NAME, MR. FORD ALLUDED TO THIS CHARGE IN THE PORTLAND SPEECH, COUPLING IT WITH THE ACCUSATION THAT HIS ADMINISTRATION HAS BEEN "SOFT" IN ITS ARMS NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE SOVIET UNION. BOTH CHARGES ARE "NONSENSE," SAID THE PRESIDENT, AND HE ADDED: "WHENEVER I CAN GET A GOOD AGREEMENT FOR A SAFER WORLD YOU CAN BE SURE I WON'T PASS IT UP FOR ANY POLITICAL ADVANTAGE OR DISADVANTAGE."

IT IS DOUBTFUL THAT MR. FORD'S DEFENSE OF HIS POLICIES WILL SATISFY ALL HIS CRITICS; IT IS DOUBTFUL, TOO, THAT THEY WILL BE COMPLETELY CONVINCED THAT HE IS NOT MAKING AT LEAST SOME OF THIS YEAR'S FOREIGN POLICY DECISIONS WITH AN EYE ON THE DOMESTIC POLITICAL BAROMETER. NEVERTHELESS, IT PROBABLY WOULD BE SAFE TO SAY THAT THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FOREIGN POLICY AND THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN IS BEING SOMEWHAT

OVERBLOWN, AND THAT THE CONDUCT OF AMERICAN DIPLOMACY ON THE REALLY VITAL INTERNATIONAL ISSUES IS NOT TOO FAR DIFFERENT FROM WHAT IT WOULD BE IN A NON-ELECTION YEAR. IT'S JUST THAT IN AN ELECTION YEAR THESE ISSUES TEND TO BE TALKED ABOUT MORE THAN USUAL---AND NOT ALWAYS WITH THE ACCURACY AND RESTRAINT WITH WHICH THEY DESERVE TO BE TREATED.

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